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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF KENNETH A. COOK
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Before the
United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation

Hearing:
Safety and Security of Spent Nuclear Fuel Transportation

Wednesday, September 24, 2008, at 2:30 pm
Submitted for the Record

Chairman Inouye, Ranking Member Hutchison, distinguished members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on crucial issues surrounding the safety and security of the transportation of lethal, long-lived nuclear waste across the United States. My name is Kenneth Cook and I am president of Environmental Working Group (EWG), a non-profit environmental research and advocacy organization that uses the power of information to protect public health and the environment. EWG has offices in Washington, DC, Oakland, California, and Ames, Iowa.

Since 2002, EWG has produced analyses to help educate the public about the implications of transporting deadly radioactive wastes from nuclear power plants around the United States to Yucca Mountain, should the proposed nuclear waste repository there become operational.

Today I want to emphasize three points:

1. The American public's fundamental right to understand the full implications of shipping thousands of tons of extremely hazardous nuclear waste across this country should be central to the government's process for licensing Yucca Mountain, for operating any other repository for this material, and for all decisions to relicense existing reactors or build new ones. The federal government has not respected that right to know.
2. It makes no sense to generate tons more nuclear waste when we have not figured out what to do with the tens of thousands of tons already on hand. Our government has ignored that common sense precaution.
3. The government is rushing to approve the license application for Yucca Mountain before rudimentary, life and death questions have been resolved about transportation, storage, and a truly protective radiation safety standard. We should not burden our children and their children with unacceptable risks.

People of every state have the right to know and fully understand the implications *for them* of the transportation of nuclear waste in their communities, the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository, and the construction of new reactors *before* the licenses go forward, the permits are granted, or the plans approved. Decisions made hundreds of miles away will have profound implications for the shipment of high-level, deadly nuclear waste through their neighborhoods for decades to come.